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DANCE AFRICA NEW YORK, WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

By **News Ghana** - May 25, 2012 65

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There is one name in New York that is so popular than every other when one is doing an intelligent discussion on African and African American Music and Dance. For a man who served as a US Naval Officer and “accidentally” became a dancer and master choreographer, the founding of one of the world’s most popular and well-organized African Music and Dance Celebration-DANCE AFRICA, is a testimony to his determination, hardwork, dedication and passion for success: A humble and ever-smiling and most friendly Baba Chuck Davis now Dr. Charles Chuck Davis, is the name of the moment. He has popularised the Ghanaian call and response AGOO! and AMEE ! so much that they have become the signature greetings and call for attention in most US performance arts events.

DANCE AFRICA is an annual memorial day week long celebration (festival) of African and African-American cultural arts and traditions that features many performing arts companies and market bazaar in Brooklyn sponsored and hosted by the Brooklyn Aacdemy of Music (BAM) in New York.

Now in its 35th Year, the official launching ceremony featured a Ghanaian US based group, ADANFO Ensemble which are the highlight group that are a stand in for a Ghana based group AMMAMRE MMA Ensemble which was not able to travel to the US due to circumstances beyond their control. Among other prominent Ghanaians associated with this year’s celebration is a Ghanaian ethnomusicologist, historian and multicultural educator, Harold Akyeampong, who has facilitated a pre-performance clinics for Brooklyn Academy of Music.

So who is the man behind DANCE AFRICA?



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Chuck Davis (artistic director and founding Elder) is one of the foremost teachers and choreographers of traditional African dance in America and has traveled extensively in Africa to study with leading African artists. Davis founded the Chuck Davis Dance Company in New York City in 1968 and the African American Dance Ensemble in Durham, North Carolina in 1983.

He has been a panelist for several programs of the National Endowment for the Arts and is a recipient of the AARP Certificate of Excellence, the North Carolina Dance Alliance Award, the 1990 North Carolina Artist Award, and the North Carolina Order of the Long Leaf Pine. Since 1991, at the request of the governor, he has served on the board of the North Carolina Arts Council, and in 1992 he received the North Carolina Award in Fine Arts, the state's highest honor.



launched in 1994 by the NY Foundation for the Arts and funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts.

Professional awards include a Monarch, a “Bessie,” and a “BAMmie.” In 1998, Davis was awarded a doctorate from Medgar Evers College and special honors from Duke University for his work in promoting dance across the US. Chuck Davis/DanceAfrica were named to Dance Heri-tage Coalition’s list of “America’s Irreplaceable Dance Treasures: The First 100.”

In 2004, Davis received a prestigious Dance Magazine Award in honor of his many achievements, and this April was honored at the Kennedy Center in the week-long celebration, “Masters of African-American Choreography.”

In 2006, Baba Chuck received an Honorary Masters from Williams College, Williamstown, MA, where he was the commencement speaker. He also received the 2006 Balasaraswati/Joy Ann Dewey Beinecke Chair for Distinguished Teaching at the American Dance Festival at Duke University, Durham, NC.